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Activities of the Department of Public Information

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The changes introduced by the Department of Public Information over the past four years as part of the Secretary-General's reform initiatives have fundamentally changed the way the Department defines its mission and carries out its activities. The work of the Department is now driven by three strategic choices: achieving greater effectiveness in its communications work through targeted delivery, making enhanced use of the new information and communications technologies in all areas of its work and building an expanded grass-roots support base through partnerships with civil society organizations. The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 60/109 B, summarizes the key advances made in the past six months (from July 2005 to February 2006) in each of the above areas.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 9 of its resolution 60/109 B, the General Assembly took note of the proposals and actions of the Secretary-General to improve the effective and targeted delivery of public information activities, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the Assembly, and requested the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-eighth session.

2. In several other paragraphs of resolution 60/109 B, the General Assembly called on the Department of Public Information to provide specific information on a number of its activities. In consultation with the Bureau of the Committee on Information, it was decided that the information requested by the Assembly would be combined and clustered around five thematic areas. The first four reports therefore address requests for information on such specific areas as the activities and new strategic directions of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2006/1), the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries (A/AC.198/2006/2), the United Nations website with regard to progress towards parity among the official languages (A/AC.198/2006/3) and the assessment of the effectiveness of United Nations public information products and activities (A/AC.198/2006/4). The present report, the fifth one, covers the overall activities of the Department and provides information on the remaining areas for which the Assembly requested information. Unless otherwise noted, the report covers the period from July 2005 to February 2006.

II. Effective and targeted delivery of public information activities

3. The measures introduced by the Department over the past four years as part of the Secretary-General's reform initiatives have fundamentally changed the way the Department defines its mission and carries out its activities. The changes have created a new strategic orientation that emphasizes a closer working relationship with the substantive departments and offices of the Secretariat and the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in developing information material and campaigns that advance the substantive objectives of the Organization. New information and communications technologies have been introduced and integrated at all levels of the Department's work, including the network of information centres, with a view to increasing productivity and speeding up the delivery of its products and services. The Department has forged new and stronger partnerships with civil society, educational institutions and the public and private sectors to maximize its global outreach.

A. 2005 World Summit

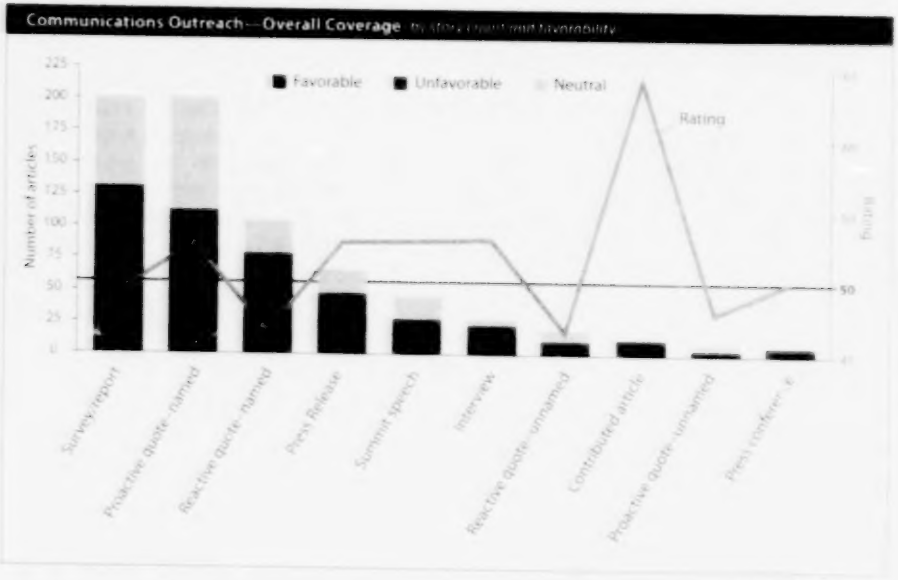
4. During 2005, the United Nations has again been at the centre of intense media attention and debate. Such controversial issues as the oil-for-food programme and allegations of mismanagement in other areas have continued to reverberate in the press. At the same time, the Organization has been seen as central to the international response to several natural disasters around the world, in particular the South-East Asian tsunami and the earthquake in South Asia, to the feared avian flu

pandemic and to such issues of current importance as the inquiry into the assassination of the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafiq Hariri, and the dispute over the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The 2005 World Summit, which was held at United Nations Headquarters in September 2005, in particular its agenda of reform and revitalization, has fostered a lively debate in media in all regions of the world about the role, relevance and future of the Organization.

5. The 2005 World Summit provided an historic opportunity for Member States to come together and take action on grave global threats requiring bold global solutions. Promoting the Summit, with its complex, ambitious and often controversial agenda, was both a challenge and an opportunity for the Department. Building on the successful communications campaign in the lead-up to the Summit, which was summarized in the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/60/173), the Department launched a coordinated effort to bring the Summit Outcome to the media's attention in the quickest and most effective manner. So as to keep pace with developments, the Department updated media materials as they were being drafted and designed and contacted the world press for interviews with senior United Nations officials. As many as 125 interviews and background briefings were set up by the Department between August and mid-September (see figure I below). Close cooperation was maintained among departments, within the Department, and with the Office of the Secretary-General. With the benefit of updated materials and regular guidance from New York, the information centres actively contributed to the communications campaign. Rapid response extended to the Summit itself. A two-page fact sheet highlighting tangible achievements was distributed on the second day of the Summit and brought immediate attention to what had been accomplished, as opposed to what needed further action.

Figure 1

During 2005, the United Nations faced wide-ranging public attacks and allegations on several fronts, inevitably compromising the promotion of the 2005 World Summit agenda. Based on clippings culled from 71 publications judged to be among the most influential at regional and global levels, the Department, with the help of an independent consultant, has reviewed the quantitative and qualitative value of its work with the media. The consultant judged that the proactive efforts of the United Nations communications team produced a discernible overall positive impact in the global media. The review shows that when United Nations spokespersons were provided the opportunity to speak directly to the media on substantive issues, the Organization was depicted in a more positive light.



6. Media interest at the time of the Summit was very high. Over 3,000 journalists were accredited by the Department for daily coverage of the Summit. In order to ensure adequate service for such a large group, the Department developed an innovative and very successful media liaison programme that benefited from the assistance of more than 200 graduate student volunteers. A media centre was also set up and facilities offered for broadcast transmissions. Demand for the use of audio transmission facilities was the highest ever, with Radio France Internationale (France); Catalunya Radio (Spain); RCN Radio (Colombia); WMCA Radio (United

States of America), RAI (Italy) and RTE (Ireland) among those stations that took advantage of the facilities. The Department also carried out its regular coverage activities, with additional programming and material. Over 20 press conferences and briefings during the three-day Summit were covered on live TV, webcast, and in photo and text products. The webcast received over 85,000 live views from over 125 countries during the three days, with many more viewers accessing archived materials.

7. On the opening day of the Summit, United Nations Radio co-produced a prime-time two-hour special live broadcast with China National Radio on its flagship news channel. For the first time ever, the world's largest radio network devoted an entire two-hour listening period to United Nations issues. United Nations Radio also provided direct broadcasts of the statements of many world leaders to their respective national broadcast networks. Special interviews were also conducted with various Heads of State and Government. For example, an exclusive interview with an African Head of State, the first and only one granted to the international media since his taking office, was quoted and used by a number of key international broadcasters, among them the BBC, Africa N° 1, Radio Canada International and Agence France Presse. For the first time, the Department was responsible for the group photo of world leaders and succeeded in placing it in global media.

8. In an innovative approach to informing New Yorkers and visitors to the city about the Summit, the Department launched an advertising campaign, with the theme "Everyone's a Delegate". The ads, which began on 29 August and ran for well over a month, were shown in 1,000 subway cars and 1,000 bus interiors, at 250 Long Island railway and Metro North train stations, 51 dioramas at New York area airports and 90 telephone kiosks in Manhattan. The Department also created a two-minute video that ran pro bono every hour starting in early September on the Panasonic screen in Times Square. Four 30-second television spots featured a typical New Yorker addressing the General Assembly about important issues on the Summit agenda. The spots ran from 8 to 16 September on Time Warner cable channels, WNBC and WABC. Though the campaign was local, articles and news reports about it appeared around the world, thereby confirming its value as a public information tool.

9. After the Summit, the Department immediately shifted its attention to keeping the world informed about the implementation of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, adopted by the General Assembly as resolution 60/1. In December, after the General Assembly had approved the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Department prepared background materials and arranged for a press briefing to be given by the President of the Assembly. Media advisories were also distributed to the information centres, keeping them abreast of the key issues surrounding the Commission and its mandate. The Department is continuing to inform the world media of every new development relating to the implementation of the Summit Outcome.

10. Also in follow-up to the World Summit, the Department repackaged the publication *Sixty Ways the United Nations Makes a Difference*, and released it as a photo essay at the Summit in recognition of the sixtieth anniversary. In addition to being issued at Headquarters in the six official languages, 21 information centres published the booklet in 23 local languages, including Armenian, Bangla, Czech, Danish, Farsi, Finnish, Icelandic, Japanese and Kiswahili.

B. Thematic communications campaigns

World Summit on the Information Society

11. Faced with a groundswell of controversy on Internet governance issues, the Department of Public Information worked with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to promote and explain to the world media the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Tunis in mid-November 2005. An electronic press kit was posted on the World Summit on the Information Society website, followed by press releases and media advisories and carefully targeted media interviews with ITU officials. A fact sheet was produced and circulated to clarify the options being considered to augment the current state of Internet governance. A post-Summit evaluation of more than 100 media items (see figure 2 below) revealed a mostly balanced coverage of three pre-selected messages: the importance of overcoming the digital divide; the value of a broad-based stakeholders approach to Internet governance; and the quality of freedom of expression as essential for the information society. It also showed reaction ranging from relief to satisfaction with the negotiated governance outcome. Another positive Summit event was the gathering of 300 broadcast executives in Tunis at a World Electronic Media Forum, organized in association with the Department and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which endorsed the principles of the information society and support for the Millennium Development Goals.

Figure 2

Presence of key information Summit messages
Bridging the Digital Divide
Stakeholders Approach to Internet Governance
Freedom of Expression
Number of Hits
Source: UN DPI Development Section

12. The Department also organized two live video Internet chats during the World Summit on the Information Society to demonstrate the benefits of using such low-cost technology to bridge the digital divide between Africa and the rest of the world. The first video chat featured students in Cameroon, England, France and Kenya discussing the challenges girls face in secondary education. The second video chat included teachers who had gathered at six information centres in Africa (Bujumbura, Dakar, Nairobi, Ouagadougou, Pretoria and Yaounde) to discuss information and communications technologies and cultural diversity. The two events, both conducted by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, generated a keen interest on the part of other information centres, in both the technology and the possibility of hosting future interactions.

Top Ten Stories

13. "Ten Stories the World Should Hear More About", a Department outreach initiative now in its second year, has demonstrated the potential to reach sizeable audiences in different parts of the world and help to draw media attention to important international developments and issues that often remain underreported. The project elicited interest from a diverse range of media outlets, including specialized publications and broadcast programmes, as well as an array of websites, from educational institutions to non-governmental organizations and weblogs (blogs). Among news agencies, the dispatches by the InterPress Service and the Congolese News Agency were reprinted in a number of developing countries, with particularly strong pick-up in the Arabic language press. Moreover, the initiative was featured on such major online players as Yahoo, which chose it as its pick of the month, and Infoplease.com, which highlighted six of what it called "the most compelling stories". Outreach efforts through a series of op-ed pieces and interviews helped to highlight the initiative in *The International Herald Tribune*, *The South China Morning Post*, PBS's NewsHour, CNN International and *The Hindu*, with subsequent ripple effects in other outlets, in particular on the Internet.

Box 1

Commenting on the Department's *Top Ten Stories*, a blogger wrote that the stories should be "compulsory topics for media coverage and national debate ... and [they should be] asking the question, 'What are we going to do about them'?" (http://now.rickeyre.com).

The Millennium Development Goals

14. Spurred by the five-year review by the General Assembly of the Millennium Development Goals, the ongoing efforts of Professor Jeffrey Sachs and the Millennium Project, the anti-poverty orientation of the G8 meeting and the controversies at the 2005 World Summit, the Millennium Development Goals received growing global attention. The Department worked with other United Nations agencies, the Millennium Project, and the non-governmental organizations affiliated with the Millennium Campaign to coordinate and harmonize messages and take advantage of opportunities for promotion. A major project of the Department was the publication in three languages, and the later reprinting, of an innovatively designed and illustrated Millennium Development Goals progress report, based on the most comprehensive and up-to-date statistics ever made available on the topic. The statistics were collected and processed by a working group of statisticians from 20 United Nations agencies and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Human rights

15. The Department continued to support the promotion of human rights and the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the work of the human rights committees and the special rapporteurs. It facilitated media contacts, press briefings and produced public information materials, including an

English-French press kit, jointly produced with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights. More than 160 stories on the Commission were featured during its session, with coverage by media outlets from all continents, including BBC, Al-Jazeera, *The New York Times*, *The Jakarta Post* and *Sudan Tribune*. The observance of Human Rights Day continued to be an important element in the Department's efforts to promote human rights.

Question of Palestine

16. In addition to the promotion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Department organized its annual training programme for Palestinian media practitioners. Ten young television and radio journalists, including six women, participated in the 2005 programme from October to December 2005 and received skills training in radio programming and television production. Working under communications professionals in the Department, each was able to file stories and interviews on the Palestinian issue from Headquarters, offering their listeners and readers a perspective that would not otherwise be readily available to them. In its 10-year history, the programme has helped improve the skills of 96 Palestinian journalists.

Box 2

Al-Jazeera television network, which broadcast a special report on the 2005 training programme, described it as "one of the most important opportunities available to young professionals from the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

New Partnership for Africa's Development

17. The Department of Public Information found new opportunities to promote New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Africa's blueprint for development, and to give greater visibility to the United Nations support for its implementation. In June, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Department organized and carried out a campaign to publicize the main findings and recommendations of the advisory panel of the Secretary-General on international support for NEPAD in 2005. The story was picked up by *The New York Times*, Associated Press and a score of other publications and media outlets worldwide, in particular in Africa and Asia. The Department also used various other means to reach targeted audiences, including direct mailings. Stories on the goals, challenges and achievements of NEPAD appeared regularly in the Department's quarterly magazine, *Africa Renewal/Afrique Renouveau*, which reaches a combined audience of some 33,000, including viewers of its website (www.un.org/AR). This year, an innovative feature, "NEPAD monitor", regularly highlights new progress. Many of these articles were also published in daily newspapers in Africa and Asia, and on major Africa-interest websites (allAfrica.com and Afrik.com, among others), which greatly expanded the reach and influence of United Nations materials.

Box 3

In December 2005, a former president of a country in Africa wrote to the Department requesting he continue to receive the publication *Africa Renewal*. He asked that his address be updated and his title be changed to "former President".

C. Outreach to civil society

Partnership with non-governmental organizations

18. In its efforts to improve the quality of information available to over 1,500 non-governmental organizations associated with the Department and to make this information more easily accessible to them, the Department has introduced several additional components to its existing information programmes, weekly non-governmental organization briefings, communications workshops and annual Department of Public Information/NGO conference, over the past six months. A summary of each briefing is now disseminated to non-governmental organizations and is also webcast. Summaries, webcasts and briefing photos are available for reference on the Department's Non-Governmental Organizations Section website (www.un.org/dpi/ngosection), which has been redesigned to offer more user-friendly and up-to-date information. Ad hoc briefings on current topics by senior United Nations officials, such as on the Volcker report and the aftermath of the earthquake in South Asia, were introduced to follow the main briefing panel discussion each week. In order to strengthen its partnership with its associated non-governmental organizations, the Department arranged a town hall meeting and communications workshop in December 2005. As a result, a joint communications strategy is now being developed for the 59th annual Department of Public Information/NGO Conference, scheduled for 6 to 8 September 2006.

Educational outreach

19. Connecting with students and teachers remains a cornerstone of the Department's outreach efforts. By using a variety of tools, including electronic communications via the Internet, meeting with remote partners through live webcasts and videoconferences and enhancing partnerships with educational institutions, the Department increasingly finds itself well inside the classroom. Through its Global Teaching and Learning project and accompanying CyberSchoolBus website, the Department has developed new and innovative approaches to learning about the United Nations. With funding from the United Nations Development Programme Millennium Campaign, CyberSchoolBus has launched the Millennium Development Goals youth site, the most comprehensive website on the Millennium Development Goals for users 25 years of age and under, featuring cutting-edge interactive maps, personal stories relating to each goal and an innovative user-based content area where young people can submit their own stories, multimedia artwork, essays and interviews. CyberSchoolBus also organized the 2005 student observance of the International Day of Peace. The event, attended by over 600 students, featured videoconference presentations of conflict-resolution projects initiated by young people around the world.

20. The *UN Chronicle*, issued in the six official languages, and its online version, are now used as a primary source for many United Nations-related assignments. *UN Chronicle e-Alert*, a regular, thematic e-publication aimed primarily at the educational community, provides links to articles from the *UN Chronicle*, as well as to relevant educational and informational resources. According to a recent Google search, the magazine and its articles have been referred to in nearly 80,000 instances outside the United Nations own server; it is also reproduced and redisseminated on such services as Lexis-Nexis Executive.

Box 4

According to DePaul University's representative to the United Nations, the articles in the *UN Chronicle* provide "the needed global perspective, stimulate academic research and service projects, and inspire a multitude of actions that faculty and students can take to participate in the international community, both in international corporations and civil society institutions".

21. The Department's UN Works programme carried out another educational initiative in collaboration with the Smithsonian Museum and the National Museum of Australia. In "Talk-back classroom", a media forum, students from New York debated global issues with students from Australia via satellite hook-up. On 27 October 2005, the students interviewed the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and leading journalists on issues related to the United Nations in the world today. The UN Works programme also collaborated with the United States-based MTV Network to produce a one-hour documentary about the impact of the earthquake in Pakistan.

Messengers of Peace

22. United Nations Goodwill Ambassadors and Messengers of Peace, working with the cooperation and guidance of the Department, continued to help raise public awareness and focus media attention on United Nations priority areas. Five of the Messengers (Vijay Amritraj, Michael Douglas, Jane Goodall, Elie Wiesel and Anna Cataldi) were featured in public service announcements to promote the Millennium Development Goals. The Messengers also contributed by keeping media attention on the victims of natural disasters in 2005 in three separate visits to the tsunami-affected areas and through fund-raising efforts for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, as well as by assisting in the media outreach strategy for the 2005 World Summit. Four of them held a press conference on the Summit Outcome, focusing on their areas of advocacy.

Exhibitions

23. The exhibitions organized by the Department of Public Information are free and accessible to the nearly one million visitors who pass through the Public Lobby at Headquarters each year. In 2005, the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, the Department produced a comprehensive historical exhibition with complete captions and chronology for use by educators, historians and the general public.

Another exhibition, created in connection with the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, dealt with the Holocaust. Photographic exhibitions related to the seminar series, "Unlearning Intolerance", were also mounted in the Public Lobby. The visitors' experience was expanded through exhibits of art, photography, sculpture and artifacts representing the culture of indigenous peoples, folk art from Brazil and Haiti and, reflecting the spirit of the East, a view of natural heritage sites in China and Japan. Two exhibitions dealing with the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons were inaugurated during the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in May 2005. Several hundred survivors of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 came to the exhibit site at Headquarters and many spent time speaking with visitors about their life experiences. There were several other exhibitions that dealt with contemporary themes.

Box 5

United Nations exhibits often elicit strong emotional responses. This is how one guest commented on the Holocaust exhibit:

> "Thank you for bringing this very moving exhibition to the United Nations. To say it moved me deeply would be to trivialize its importance. We all need to learn that we are our brothers' keepers and accept and act on our responsibility to protect our fellow human beings, regardless of race or persuasion."

D. Services to the media

24. The Department has continued to improve and expand its delivery of news products and services targeted to the media in all parts of the world. Client surveys carried out in the past year show a high degree of satisfaction with the Department's radio, video, photo, print and web-based products, while at the same time indicating ways in which these services could be further enhanced, many of which the Department has taken steps to address.

25. Improved and expanded web-based delivery of services to the media and to other target audiences remains a priority for the Department. A new press release web page, launched in early 2006, provides direct and quick access to coverage of intergovernmental meetings and other United Nations activities from the United Nations home page. The page increases the search capability of these resources and includes links to the media pages of United Nations offices at Headquarters and overseas. A survey of media clients at Headquarters reflected the desire for more timely releases, even though the Department met its target of making 70 per cent of the releases available within two hours of a meeting. To help address this, Security Council and General Assembly statements are now posted on the Internet in batches to provide media and other clients with the material they need, well in advance of issuing the final press release at the completion of meetings.

26. The Department has undertaken a number of initiatives to better service all journalists working at Headquarters, including those seeking temporary accreditation. The daily Media Alert, which is also available to delegation press attachés, is now available on the Web, providing links to background information, and is regularly updated. The Department is now developing a fully web-based online accreditation and notification system. It has also developed an intensive briefing programme, United Nations 101, for visiting foreign journalists, in cooperation with the Foreign Press Center of the United States Department of State.

27. The United Nations News Centre on the United Nations website has also continued to demonstrate its growing usefulness to media and other audiences. The number of unique visits to the English site, for example, rose from some 355,000 in June and August 2004 to some 539,000 in the same period of 2005. Media outlets such as *Le Monde*, *The Guardian* (United Kingdom) and AllAfrica.com, regularly provide reverse links to the site, and United Nations News Service stories are consistently prominent in search results by Google News and Yahoo. Subscriptions to the daily e-mail news service rose by over 30 per cent over the course of 2005. In a survey, 72 per cent of subscribers gave the United Nations News Service the top two ratings for overall satisfaction.

Box 6

Subscribers to the daily e-mail news often serve as redisseminators. One such redisseminator wrote to DPI:

> "I forward your news articles concerning young people to 91 organizations in 57 countries involving over 2.5 million young people in Peaceways-Young General Assembly. Please keep me on your list."

28. Webcasting of United Nations meetings and events has also seen a sharp rise in use, by over 50 per cent in 2005, further broadening the Department's outreach in real time (see A/AC.198/2006/3).

Media training programme

29. The 2005 Reham al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme, a training programme for junior media professionals from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, introduced a number of innovations to better reflect the Organization's priorities, in particular its partnerships with civil society organizations and educational sectors. The aim was to involve not only the Secretariat but also representatives of the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in briefings on such important topics as Security Council reform. For example, a senior Secretariat official and a permanent representative debated the impact of the 2005 World Summit on the agenda of the United Nations. The participants in 2005 also met with civil society representatives to hear about their role in supporting the work of the United Nations and attended the annual Department of Public Information/NGO conference. The participants were required to file stories on the Summit and on their visit to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in

Washington, D.C. The programme has trained a total of 372 journalists over the past 25 years.

E. Use of new technology

30. With both Web and digital technology transforming the delivery of news and information products, the adaptation and integration of new technology is at the core of the Department's news operations, in both production and modes of delivery. UNIFEED, a satellite delivery of news video, is just one example of the process of response to changing demands (see para. 52 below for additional information). Similarly, the growth in webcasting has shown the widening geographic range of the audience for the delivery of news in real time. Expansion of the service to permit delivery in floor and other languages is now under way.

31. The Department is similarly enhancing other web- and e-mail-based delivery systems for its text, audio and photo products and services, which have to be undertaken in conjunction with enhancements to the overall information technology infrastructure, including backup systems. It is working closely with the Information Technology Services Division in this regard, in particular as a result of the vulnerabilities in the existing delivery systems, which became evident in the power failure and consequent shut down of the electronic systems at Headquarters last September. One of the first efforts in this regard has been the technical enhancement of the e-mail news service, which will respond to subscribers' demands for improved customization and delivery options and will finally permit expansion of the service to official languages other than English and French. Further improvements are also planned for the delivery of audio and photos, the latter with the installation of a front-end web-based delivery system for Networked Interactive Content Access (NICA) for high-resolution photos, which again will help meet the request of clients for improved timeliness and easier access.

32. Internal production systems have also benefited from the introduction of new technology. The NICA (back-end) photo module was introduced in May 2004 and has increased productivity and improved internal efficiency by providing a central photo retrieval resource for all internal users. The NICA (back-end) photo module has also facilitated batch photo distribution to selected wire agencies. The "Radioman" module for United Nations Radio production was introduced on the heels of the NICA module. This was a far more complex system to implement, given the many information technology infrastructure challenges at Headquarters. Eighty-eight workstations link the system to United Nations Radio editorial offices, radio studios, audio library, a hub where audio is converted to data, and the Headquarters data centre. Major networking and configuration issues were resolved in the first half of 2005, and when the system is fully implemented with the on-air playback module, workflow in radio production and dissemination, as well as archiving, will be significantly streamlined. Web publishing will be automated and the benefit of having the audio clips as segments pre-positioned in the playlist will permit the Department to update its daily radio news programmes more often and more easily, as well as enable it to pursue the development of audio distribution via mobile devices, another new development with exciting potential to reach new and younger audiences.

33. The Department is also continuing the modernization of its broadcast infrastructure, in particular the conversion to digital technology, although the pace and scope of these efforts are constrained by continuing uncertainties over the precise timing and configurations for the capital master plan.

III. United Nations Radio

34. The fear that the introduction of new information and communication technologies would diminish the importance of traditional means of communication, such as radio, has proven to be unfounded. Instead, the integration of new technologies has broadened the scope of United Nations Radio broadcasts and expanded its outreach. The Department's radio and video programmes now reach an estimated total weekly audience of 599 million, according to a survey carried out by an independent expert. For radio alone, audience reach was close to 300 million a week for the programmes produced in the six official languages and Portuguese, and not counting listeners reached through satellite feeds. This is more than double the reach estimated in 2003 when a similar survey was conducted. The survey showed that the number of partner stations rose by over 20 per cent (see A/AC.198/2006/4).

35. In recent months, United Nations Radio has undertaken a number of special initiatives, including the production of a project, "60 Years in 60 Minutes", by the Russian language unit. The project included the production of 30 two-minute short stories covering major events in the history of the Organization based on archival sounds and actualities. In another project, also linked to the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization, the Chinese service organized an essay competition in conjunction with partner stations in Shanghai, Tianjin and Henan. Radio listeners were asked to send short essays, on the theme "The United Nations in my eyes". Of the tens of thousands of entries received, the stations selected six winning entries, recorded them in the writers' own voices and broadcast them on United Nations Radio. Radio Shanghai also had the winning entries serialized in a leading newspaper and compiled a souvenir compact disc.

Box 7

One of the winners of the radio essays in Chinese was a farmer who recalled having received United Nations aid in the late 1940s after the Yellow River had flooded. He wrote:

> "My aunt handed me a western-style coat, which was so big that it reached my knees. I jumped up and down with joy. 'It has come a long way, across the ocean from the United Nations,' my aunt told me."

36. In November 2005, United Nations Radio launched *UN Radio News/USA*, a new information service offering short daily news updates, feature reports and actualities for use in programmes produced locally. The service also provides access to complete and unedited audio of interviews, news conferences, meetings and speeches to allow journalists to cover United Nations issues and events from a local perspective. All audio materials are available for download in .mp3 format, free of

charge on the information service's dedicated website, http://radio.un.org/newsuse. Currently, the service has 131 registrants, including 14 radio networks, 28 radio stations and 15 content providers. Regular users include major networks such as Clear Channel News, Voice of America, Radio France Internationale, and Free Speech Radio News, as well as individual stations.

IV. Preservation of radio, video and photo archives

37. The photo and audio-visual archives of the United Nations are a unique treasure house and the Department is very much focused on meeting the challenge of preserving this legacy for the benefit of current and future audiences. The challenges include the appraisal and collection of records; access; preservation and restoration; disaster preparedness; and crucially, resources, on which all the other categories rely. The Department is working on a number of fronts. First, within existing resources, some 16,415 legacy photos have been ingested into the NICA system and work is under way to complete the ingestion of corresponding metadata to permit fast and easier access to those historical images. Second, the Department participated in the recent World Conference of the International Federation of Television Archives, where it launched an appeal to form a partnership with leading companies and organizations in the field of preservation and conservation and philanthropic groups, to provide technical guidance and assistance and to help raise funds for the preservation of the Organization's archives. The Department is presently working with the Federation to determine the best strategy and to identify the requirements for the preservation of the audio-visual archives. As an initial step, graduate students specializing in archival audio-visual preservation and restoration will be enlisted in the summer of 2006 to help prepare a baseline inventory of the items needing immediate treatment.

V. Publicizing the work and decisions of the General Assembly

A. Cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Office of the President of the General Assembly

38. The Department continued to seek additional ways to further publicize the work and decisions of the General Assembly and to strengthen its working relationship with the President of the Assembly. The Department appointed a spokesperson who had been working extensively on the lead-up campaign for the 2005 World Summit, in view of the President's emphasis on the negotiations as integral to the revitalization of the Assembly. The Department continued to loan an information assistant to work full-time with the Spokesperson for the President, thus providing back-up support and continuity in the flow of information to the media, especially needed in this period of intensive negotiations. The Department also provided ongoing support to updating the website providing information on the work of the President of the Assembly.

39. Coverage of the activities of the General Assembly and of the President of the Assembly was also significantly expanded. In addition to transmitting the statements of the Heads of State and Government to the national radio stations of the least developed countries during the General Debate, United Nations Radio

conducted interviews with a number of presidents, vice-presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers, including from Belarus, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Colombia, Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Paraguay, Portugal, the Sudan and Togo. The on-line NewsCentre also devoted numerous stories in media-friendly language to the work of the Assembly and its various Committees, drawing on the detailed summaries provided by the Department's daily press releases. *UN Chronicle* carried an extensive interview with the President of the Assembly in issue No. III (2005) and followed up with extensive coverage of the sixtieth session of the Assembly in issue No. IV (2005), covering the general debate, as well as discussions in Committees. The Department also gave the spotlight to the President of the Assembly at a number of outreach events, including the 2005 student conference on human rights, which focused on the right to water.

B. Coordination between the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General and the Department of Public Information

40. The Department worked closely with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, in particular the Office of the Spokesman, and with relevant substantive offices, to ensure clear, consistent and coordinated messaging and continued rapid response to misinformation in the media, including that concerning the decisions of the General Assembly. A daily, early morning meeting involving senior officials of the Department, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and other offices, as necessary, ensures timely guidance for responses to breaking stories, as well as a forum for determining the strategic direction for wider messaging and other outreach efforts. Coordination is also reinforced through subsequent daily meetings between the operational staff of the Department and the Office of the Spokesman, again involving relevant substantive offices, as necessary, to ensure an accurate, up-to-date and consistent approach in the daily news output. In addition, the system of regular guidance to United Nations officials on key issues before the media, which proved so valuable in 2004, is being continued. The Department has also continued to provide dedicated resources to written responses to misinformation, to media placement work with senior officials and to assisting in the placement of op-ed articles by the Secretary-General and other officials in newspapers around the world. From June to December 2005, the Department was able to arrange a total of 227 op-ed placements in 63 countries.

VI. Role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping

41. In cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department completed two major guidance projects for the public information components of peacekeeping missions during the period under review, on the themes "Policy and guidance for public information in United Nations peacekeeping operations", which included 20 annexes, and "Standard operating procedures on public information activities on sexual exploitation and abuse". The first provides field operations with complete standard operating procedures for every aspect of implementing public information work in the field, while the second provides instructions to peacekeeping missions on how to communicate on related conduct and criminal allegations and issues. These guidance projects complement the skills

training, support and interaction between the Department and the public information components of peacekeeping missions and have resulted in delivering better services to media covering peacekeeping.

42. These efforts have begun to yield positive results. Media reports now increasingly speak of a robust presence of peacekeepers in some of the most difficult conflict zones. *The Economist* (United Kingdom), for example, headlined a December 2004 article on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, "The United Nations' hopeless force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo". A year later, in an article entitled "A giant leap forward", the same magazine noted considerable progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and cited United Nations contributions to the historic December elections and to the calm atmosphere under which they were held.

43. The multifaceted role of United Nations peacekeeping was evident in the coverage of peacekeepers in Liberia and Sierra Leone. "As the 15,000-strong United Nations peacekeeping mission oversaw the landmark polls in Liberia", noted Reuters in December 2005, "residents in neighbouring Sierra Leone were starting to wave goodbye to their blue hats. ... The last contingent of United Nations peacekeepers left in December after six years, which saw them wrest control of a wild jungle terrain from rebel and militia fighters, restore government authority, and supervise elections."

Box 8

The successful completion of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) generated near universal accolades. The peacekeepers were greeted with headlines such as: "Peacekeepers plant hope in war-torn Sierra Leone" (*Toronto Star*), "Peacekeepers leave a calm Sierra Leone" (*The Guardian* (United Kingdom)), "Regretful farewell to blue helmets" (*The Mercury-South Africa*) and "Sierra Leone touted as success in war-torn continent" (Inter Press Service). CNN noted in its report that "UNAMSIL became recognized as a model for peacekeeping and reconstruction of police, army and public institutions ruined by years of war".

44. Much of the coverage was prompted by information provided by the Department in a comprehensive press packet and media outreach. Media around the world also made extensive use of photo images disseminated by the United Nations and the Associated Press, which were shot by a United Nations photographer dispatched by the Department from Liberia to Sierra Leone to cover the departing troops. The Department had strategized over the previous months, with the Mission and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, on how to bring maximum media attention to an operation that had achieved its mandate but had scant resources, personnel or international media remaining on the ground.

VII. Dialogue among civilizations

45. In its resolution 56/6, the General Assembly emphasized the need to acknowledge and respect the richness of all civilizations and to seek common ground among them in order to comprehensively address common challenges facing humanity. Working within the overall framework of this global agenda, the Department of Public Information continued to examine different manifestations of intolerance, exploring ways to promote respect and understanding among peoples and ways in which education can help overcome intolerance. Particularly notable is the "Unlearning Intolerance" seminar series, which has helped forge a broad coalition involving the members of the academic community, non-governmental organizations and interfaith movements. Four seminars have taken place thus far, focusing on anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, the role of "hate media", and combating genocide.

Box 9

Speaking on the value of the "Unlearning Intolerance" series, Benjamin Ferencz, a former Nuremberg Chief Prosecutor, recently said, "The United Nations seminars, 'Unlearning Intolerance', reflect the universal hope that, despite inbred misconceptions and fears, humanitarian goals are attainable."

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, head of the American Society for Muslim Advancement and a panellist in the seminar on Islamophobia, wrote: "In the current state of affairs, I see few things that are as important and relevant as this. I, myself, have continued my ongoing efforts toward the same goal."

46. Following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 60/7 on holocaust remembrance, the Department organized the first International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, in January 2006, which included the launch of an annual lecture series on the theme "Remembrance and beyond", a film screening, a candlelight vigil, an exhibit and a briefing for non-governmental organizations. The Department's graphic designers created an evocative poster featuring barbed wire and a white flower as a symbol for the theme of the commemoration and the wider outreach programme. United Nations information offices worldwide were also involved in actively consulting and collaborating with local civil society partners to best reflect the spirit of Holocaust remembrance. As part of the outreach to interested partners worldwide, the Department launched a website on Holocaust remembrance, which provides background information and resources for use by Member States and civil society organizations that seek to develop Holocaust education programmes. A best practices symposium highlighting effective outreach tools and techniques on Holocaust remembrance and education and genocide prevention is planned for 2007.

Box 10

The network of United Nations information centres used the International Day of Peace to celebrate the unity and diversity of humankind in a variety of ways. Below are a few examples:

Harare: Peace procession, followed by prayers of peace offered by representatives of various religions and faith traditions.

Jakarta: Interactive dialogue on the United Nations and peace, and a theatrical and musical performance, as well as an interfaith prayer for peace, held in association with the Atmajaya Catholic University.

New Delhi: Dance-dialogue to promote peace and cultural diversity.

VIII. United Nations Communications Group

47. The United Nations Communications Group, now in its fifth year, has emerged as a strong unifying platform for dealing with common communications challenges facing the United Nations. The Group includes 39 communications offices drawn from the entire United Nations system of organizations, up from 29 in 2002, when the Group formally replaced the Joint United Nations Information Committee.

48. The United Nations Communications Group continues to use a variety of ways to achieve greater and more effective system-wide coordination, including regular brainstorming meetings at Headquarters, issue-based task forces and special projects. In 2005, the Communications Group held 29 such meetings and dealt with such complex issues as United Nations reform, the 2005 World Summit, the oil-for-food programme inquiry, the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, the tsunami and earthquake disasters in South-East Asia and South Asia, the transition in Iraq and the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Various senior United Nations officials have briefed the Communications Group, including the Secretary-General and several of his senior envoys. The annual meeting of the Communications Group, at the heads of information level, to be held at different venues around the world, in 2006 it will be hosted by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna.

Task forces

49. Currently, five task forces and/or working groups are active, two of which deal with United Nations system responses to the International Year of Sport and Physical Education, and the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015. The remaining task forces address the issues of membership in the United Nations Communications Group, the relationship of the United Nations with professional journalists and the distribution of United Nations photos.

50. The Working Group on Sports for Development and Peace is a good example of how the task forces function. Established in February 2005, the Working Group meets every two weeks to discuss coordination and cooperation so as to maximize the impact of sports activities and programmes throughout the United Nations

system and to avoid duplication. The members of the Working Group have joined efforts to draft a business plan, contribute to the report of the Secretary-General on sport for development and peace and regularly provide information and news for the United Nations Sport Bulletin, which is issued every two weeks and distributed throughout the United Nations system and among external partners. The Working Group is also identifying opportunities to link sport for development and peace with the worlds of culture and music to amplify the message of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education.

Special projects

51. A new Internet-based calendar of media events for the entire United Nations system (www.un.org/events/calendar) was launched in October 2005. The calendar, which serves as a unified platform for collecting and sharing information regarding meetings, conferences, launches of major reports and campaigns, as well as special events and exhibits, is proving to be a useful tool, helping United Nations Communications Group members to avoid duplication and overlap. Currently, 29 Communications Group members have designated focal points for providing input to the calendar on a regular basis.

52. UNIFEED, a satellite transmission service facilitating immediate access to the footage of the United Nations and its agencies and programmes, has fed more than 800 video news stories since its launch in March 2005. The service is being received by some 500 stations around the world, with such major broadcasters as Sky News, BBC, CNN and CCTV among the material. Since November 2005, the feed has been extended to Saturdays and now runs six days a week, from Monday to Saturday. Selected stories are also being distributed through the European Broadcasting Union to more than 60 television stations in Europe, the Middle East, North America and North Africa.

United Nations Communications Group at the country level

53. The success of the United Nations Communications Group is largely determined by its ability to coordinate activities at the country level. Over two thirds of the information centres currently lead efforts to coordinate the communications activities of the United Nations Country Team in one form or another. The formal creation of national communication groups could further strengthen such efforts. It was agreed at the fourth annual meeting of the Communications Group (23-24 May 2005, Geneva) that a basic operating model, which outlined principles guiding cooperation at the national level, would be developed. The paper, which was later finalized, in consultation with Communications Group members and the network of information centres, will be forwarded to the United Nations Development Group for its adoption and system-wide application.

IX. Conclusions

54. The principal task of the Department, as the public voice of the Organization, is to tell the United Nations story. In order to tell the story in a compelling manner and to the widest possible audience, it repositioned itself by identifying three strategic goals: maximizing the effectiveness of its communications work by

pursuing well-defined and targeted delivery of information products and activities, further exploiting ongoing advances in information and communication technologies, and expanding its grass-roots support base by building partnerships with civil society. Adopting a coordinated strategic communications approach that brought together all Department units, including its field offices, and the bodies and organizations of the United Nations system, the Department focused on the priority issues of the Organization. This prioritization was necessary not only to secure the greatest public impact but also to ensure the optimal use of ever-dwindling resources. As the present report demonstrates, the Department is now better placed than ever before to be the voice of the Organization and to communicate its stories to the widest possible audience.

55. Much thought has been given by Member States and the Secretariat in 2005 to better equipping the United Nations to face the challenges of the twenty-first century. Indeed, after the adoption of the Summit Outcome, the United Nations stands on the cusp of a new era. New mandates have been established and new priorities have been set. The Organization is undergoing a "time for renewal" — the Department's slogan for the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations.

56. During 2005, the Department has aimed to be innovative, creative, accountable and results-oriented. It has sought to fulfil its worldwide objectives with sorely limited resources and against the backdrop of a sometimes unfavourable environment. As the United Nations takes on the new mantle bestowed upon it by the world's leaders in September 2005, the Department stands ready to ensure that the Organization's work — new and old, unfinished and just beginning — is properly understood. With the support of the Committee on Information, the Department stands ready to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.